

VZCZCXRO8601
PP RUEHDBU RUEHPW
DE RUEHBUL #1283 1400454
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 200454Z MAY 09
FM AMEMBASSY KABUL
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9002
INFO RUCNAFG/AFGHANISTAN COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHBU/AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES PRIORITY 0063

UNCLAS KABUL 001283

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [AF](#)
SUBJECT: NO MAJOR PROTESTS EXPECTED OVER CONTINUITY OF
GOVERNMENT

REF: KABUL 1097

¶1. (SBU) Afghan politicians remain divided over support for continuity of government under President Karzai following the May 22 constitutional expiration of his term, but we have not seen evidence that opponents will organize protests against the government's legality (reftel). Privately, an overwhelming majority of MPs and other politicians tell us they recognize the need for Karzai to stay in office until the conclusion of the presidential election. However, many opposition leaders are taking a different public position, hoping to score points against Karzai by allowing the debate to play out or actively criticizing his government's legitimacy.

¶2. (SBU) Still, opponents do not appear to have gained much traction from their calls to publicly protest the government's authority. The 70 Lower House MPs who signed a letter last month demanding Karzai seek a vote of confidence from Parliament in order to remain in office have been hampered by their failure to suggest an acceptable alternative way forward should Karzai decline to accept their demands. Moreover, 150 Lower House MPs have issued a second letter supporting the government's legitimacy. The Supreme Court went on record in March consenting to Karzai's interim authority.

¶3. (SBU) Various media and opposition politicians continue to call for public demonstrations against Karzai's authority, but no group has announced plans to organize a major public event against the government on or around May 22. Leaders of a new pro-Karzai democratic coalition, the National Democratic Participatory Front (NDPF), said the Palace discouraged their plans to hold a pro-government rally on May ¶22. An NDPF leader said the Palace felt Karzai already had broad public support for remaining in office and that a rally would only draw the ire of opponents, who could launch a counter-rally and provoke violence.
EIKENBERRY